Archaeological Site of Chechar and its Identification

Dr. Sarjug Prasad Singh

Situated on the northern bank of of the Ganges about 15 kilometres to the east of Hājīpur the Buddhist site of Chechar is of great historical and archaeological significance. The ancient relics are scattered along with the river in the villages of Amer, Madhurapur, Kutubpur, Bidupur, Gopalpur, Saidpur, Bajitpur and Chechar etc., in a vast area and the archaeological complex of the site is collectively known from the last mentioned village (i.e. Chechar).

Chechar is a chalcolithic site and the discovery of the sherds of black-and-red ware of early types and fabrics and early tools of animal bones and horns and also of stones, suggests that the place might have come under occupation sometime about c. 1600 B.C., if not earlier still. The sherds of dish on-stand of black-and-red ware discovered from site show that the early settlements of Chechar are not far removed in date from the earliest habitations of Chirand (Saran district) and Sonapur (Gayā district) in Bihar. The N. B. P. Ware (c. 600 B.C.-150 B. C.) settlements of Chechar are very rich and the earliest brick structures are datable to this period. The brick structures of N. B. P. and post-N. B. P. periods are hanging over the eroded bed of Ganges in a vast area in several miles. The exposed brick structures, ring-wells, drains and pavements etc., present a clear picture of the township, construction of houses, dimensions of rooms, thickness of walls and the sizes of bricks of different periods. Early terracotta human and animal figurines, seals and sealings, silver and copper punch-marked coins, Kuṣāṇa gold and copper coins, Gupta gold and silver coins and other antiquities such as stone and terracotta beads, ivory stylus, bone arrow-heads, copper antimony rods and various other objects of stone, bone, ivory and copper now preserved in the private collections of Shri Rampukar Singh, Ram Chhabila Singh, and Mundrika Singh of Chechar suggest that the place must have enjoyed an important position from the pre-Mauryan times down to the post-Gupta

period.[1] Two interesting terracotta sealings bearing the legend *Kanikasa* i.e. of Kanika (a personal name) and *Bhaganasa*, i.e. of Bhagan (a personal name) in Brāhmī characters of about 2nd-3rd century B. C. were found in the above collections.[2]

The Chechar complex was an important urban settlement or township during the Maurya, Śuṅga, Kuṣāṇa and the Gupta periods. The great varieties of early Indian and foreign coins, seals and sealings and terracotta figurines showing Indian and foreign faces, discovered from the site in question show that it was an important city of political and religious significance and trade centre of Tīrabhukti (modern Patna in South Bihar).

The archaeological site of Chechar has now attracted the attention of the ameture archaeologists, antiquity dealers and such other interested persons and parties and some haphazard notes have appeared on the pages of the daily newspapers and weeklies such as the *Āryāvarta*, *Dinamāna*[3], and *Dharmayuga* etc., and a booklet entitled *Śvetapura kī Khoja Aura Usakā Itihāsa*, and a short note entitled 'Paper on identification of Cha-Po-Ho-Lo and its Master A-Lo-Na-Shuen' (A. D. 647-48), have been published by Y. Mishra in the proceedings of the Bhuvaneshwar Session of the Indian History Congress.[4]

---

1 In course of the author's visit of Chechar an interesting stone seal bearing the represantation of *V shaped* monogram with the inscription *Rakha* (a pereonal name) in the Brāhmī characters of the 1st-2nd century A.D. was found in the possession of Ram chhabila Singh of Chechar.

2 Four silver punch-marked coins, two cost copper coins, a silver coin of the Indo-Greek king Menander and other minor antiquities such as ivory stylus, copper antimony rod etc., were found in the possession of Shri Ram Kumar Singh and Raj Kumar Singh (of the same village) and the author is very much thankful to them. The author's thanks are also due to Shri Ram Pukar Singh for bringing the site of Chechar to the notice of the scholars. The coins are under publication.

3 See *Dinamāna* (weekly Hindi), 6-12 Nov., 1977, pp. 40 ff.

4 The coins of Chechar illustrated by Mishra in the *Dinamāna* (weekly, 6-12 Nov., 1977) and also in the booklet entitled *Śvetapura Kī Khoja Aura Usakā Itihāsa* are wrongly labelled as *āhata mudrāye*. Some of the coins illustrated by him are evidently cast coins and not *āhata* (struck or punched). Mishra has also published another booklet entitled '*Śvetapura Kī Khoja*' in Hindi. For pointed black and red ware pot-sherds and a terracotta *nāga*-hood, see plate I.

Mishra has tried to reconstruct the history of Śvetapura on the basis of his hypothesis and wrongly identifies the ancient site of Chechar with the place called Gha-puo-ho-lo known from the medieval Chinese accounts of Wang-Hiuen-tse's invasion of India. It is also wrongly believed by him that the present site (of Chechar) is the same as Shih-fei-to-po-lo (tr. in Skt. as Śvetapura) referred to by Hiuen-tsang. Mishra's contention that Chechar was the capital of the so-called Maukharī king A-lo-na-shuen or O-lo-na-shuen (Skt. Aruṇāśva 647-648 A. D.) of Ti-na-fu-ti or Tīrabhukti (modern Tirhut in north Bihar) and the Pālas (970-1097 A. D.), are doubtful. The recent explorations and excavations carried out by the Mid-Eastern Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India show no sign of the capital city of the so-called Maukharī king Aruṇāśva and the Pālas of Bengal and Bihar. Post-Gupta and Pāla remains at Chechar are negligible and the site in question does not seem to be the capital of the so-called Maukharī king Aruṇāśva and the Pāla rulers.

It is well known from the Chinese accouts of Wang-Hiuen-tse's invasion of India that Cha-puo-ho-lo, the capital city of king O-lo-na-shuen (or Aruṇāśva) of Ti-na-fu-ti (or Tīrabhukti) was situated on the river Chien-to-Wei (or Gaṇḍaka). The present site of Chechar is located on the lower stream of the Ganges far to the east (about 10 miles) from the confluence of Gaṅgā and Gaṇḍaka and hence the site in question cannot be identified with the place called Cha-puo-ho-lo, the capital of O-lo-na-shuen (or Aruṇāśva). Cha-puo-ho-lo was probably located somewhere in the Nepalese Tarai not far away from the mouth of the said river.

The death of Harsha towards the end of 647 or the beginnig of 648 (A. D.) was followed by an anarchy and confusion and the succession of the imperial throne was claimed by one of his ministers who evidently held sway in north Bihar whose name is given in the Chinese texts as Na-bu-ti O-lo-na-shuen or Aruṇāśva of Tīrabhukti. According to the tradition preserved in the Chinese annals, Aruṇāśva attacked a Chinese mission of Wang-Hiuen-tse sent by the Chinese emperor to Harsha. The reasons of attack and massacre of the members of the Chinese mission by Aruṇāśva are not known. In the attack launched by Aruṇāśva most of the members of the mission were killed

but Wang-Hiuen-tse saved his life and fled away to Nepal. He collected 7000 soilders from Nepal and 1200 (or 1000) from Tibet and launched an attack on Aruṇāśva. Aruṇāśva was defeated and was taken captive to China. According to the story preserved in the Chinese text, Wang-Hiuen-tse visited India four times and has himself left an account of his travels which is preserved in the Fa-iuen-chu-lin (compiled by Tao-chen in 668 A. D.).[5] The details of his travels are also mentioned in the *New History of the T'ang Dynasty* of which two versions are available.[6] According to these just after the death of Chi-lo-i-to (Śilāditya) Harsha, there was complete anarchy in the country and his minister O-lo-na-shuen usurped the throne and proclaimed himself as an independent monarch. He sent his barbarian forces to drive out the Chinese mission of Wang-Hiuen-tse. The latter had only thirty horsemen as an escort. In the attack launched by O-lo-na-shuen most of the members of the mission were killed; but Wang-Hiuen-tse escaped and fled to Tufan (Tibet). He collected 1200 picked soldiers and 7000 Nepalese cavalry. Wang-Hiuen-tse was assisted by Tsiang-Chen-Jenn, the second officer of the embassy and after three days battle O-lo-na-shuen (Aruṇāśva) was defeated. He fled and his capital city of Cha-puo-ho-lo was captured. He reorganised his forces and fought again; but was caught and taken captive to China. Tsiang-Chen-Jenn is said to have captured about 580 walled towns of India and received supplies for his victorious army from Chi-kieu-mo (or Śrī-Kumāra Bhāskaravarman) of Kia-mu-lu or Kāmarūpa (Assam). King Chi-kien-mo's presents to the Chinese general are stated to have included 30,000 oxen and horses and considerable war material and it is further stated that the said king of Kia-mu-lu (or Kāmarūpa) presented to the Chinese emperor some curious articles including a map of the country. The whole episode took place in the year 648 A. D. The captive Indian king O-lo-na-shuen (Aruṇāśva) remained in China till he died there.[7] The scholars doubt the historical truth of the Chinese story.

5 *IA*, 1900, p. 297 ff.

6 These have been translated by Lévi (see *Ibid*, pp. 306 ff.) and Waddell, *IAPR*, pp. 37 ff.

7 *IA*, Vol. XI, p. 20. For details of Wang-Hiuen-tse's Indian compaign see *JASB*, Letters, Vol. XIX, 1253, p. 38; Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 292 ff.

The Chinese Annals, whatever truth is there in them, show that the usurping Harṣa's minister was a local ruler of Tirhut, probably a Governor who proclaimed himielf as an independent monarch after Harṣa's death.[8] By this time the Tibetan King Srong-tsan Gampo had entered into the political arena of India and Wang-Hiuen-tse's compaign of India is regarded by some scholars as merely a part of Indian compaign of the Tibetan king.[9] Sometime in between 581 and 600 A.D. an obscure chief named Srong Tsan, united the scattered hill tribes and founded a powerful kingdom in Tibet. He had a large army and led a victorious compaign to central India; but the history of his conquest is not definitely known. Srong Tsan was succeeded by his son named Srong Tsan Gampo[10] who is said to have conquered Assam and

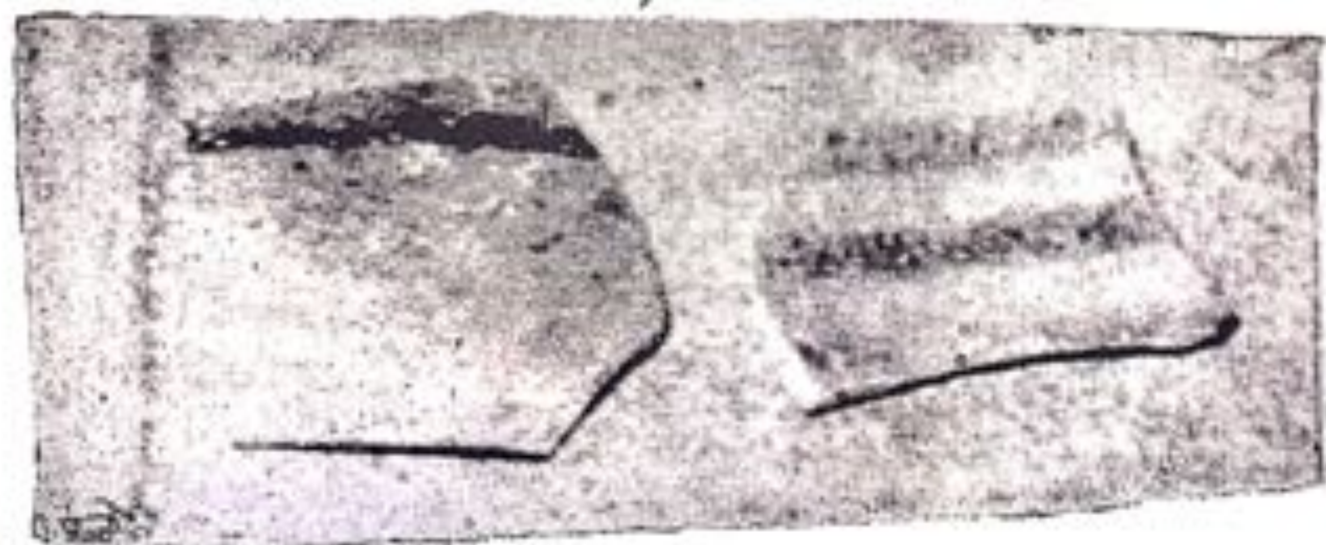
8 According to Hiuen-tsang Harṣa ruled for 36 years (Watters, *on Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, Vol. I, p. 343). 'We find two dates given for the death of king Śīlāditya (Harṣa), Chinese history placing it in the year A.D. 648 and the *Life* (of Hiuen-Tsang by Hwui-Li) in 655. Taking 36 years as the duration of his reign, we thus have 612 or 619 as the date of his accession. The latter date agrees with a Chinese statement that the troubles in India which led to Śīlāditya's reign took place in the reign of T'ang Kao Tsu (A.D. 618 to 627). But the date 648, or rather 647, is perhaps the correct one. It must have been in 641 or 642 that is conversation with our pilgrim as given in the *Life*, Śīlāditya stated that he had been soverign for about thirty years. This also gives 612 for the year of his accession, and the addition of six years to the thirty gives 648 as the date of his death. But the Chinese envoy despatched in the early part of that year found, on his arrival in the country, the King dead and a usurper on the throne. Moreover, it was in 648 that Yuan Chwang submitted his records to T'ai Tsung, and Śīlāditya must have been dead before this work was drawn up in its present form. Watters, *op. cit*, pp. 346-47; cf. Sircar, *op. cit*., pp. 291 f.; see also Chaudhuri, in *Com. Hist. Bih*., Vol. I, pt. I, p. 285; Bagchi calls O-lo-na-shuen (Arjuna or Aruṇāśva) a King of Tīrabhukti; see also *Sino-Indian Studies*, Vol. I, p. 68; Waddell suggested that the capital city of Aruṇāśva or Arjuna was the same as that of the Vajjis (of Vaiśālī) see *IAQR*, 1911, pp. 37ff and 53ff.

9 *JASB*, Letters, Vol. XIX, p. 43.

10 The Tibetan *Ladvags-rgyal-rabs* which gives an account or Srong's conquest makes no mention of his Indian expedition or even intervention in the Indian political affairs, see L. Petech, *A Study of the Chronicle of Ladakh*, pp. 518ff.; cf. Chaudhuri, *op. cit*., p. 286.







Painted Black-and-Red Ware pot-sherds and a terracotta nāga-hood from Chechar (p. 192)

Nepal and exercised suzerainty over half of *Jambūdvīpa*; but whether he actually conquered any part of the Indian territory is not known.[11] It may be noted in this connection that Srong Tsan Gampo's compaign was limited to a very narrow region along the foot hills of the Himalayas and extending into the plains of north Bihar of which Aruṇāśva was formerly a governor and later an independent ruler after Harṣa's death. The Chinese accounts of the Tibetan conquest of central India is misleading and there is no historical truth in it. Cha-puo-ho-lo, the capital of O-lo-na-shuen (Aruṇāśva) was probably not far away from the foot hills of the Himalayas somewhere in the Nepalese Tarai and the Chinese attack of Wong-Hiuen-tse was limited to a very narrow region of north Bihar and does not seem to have extended upto the persent site of Chechar near Pāṭaliputra (Patna).

It is worthy of note that the city of Fei-to-po-lo (or Buddhapura) wrongly taken as Shih-fei-to-po-lo (or Śvetapura)[12] by many scholars and the monastery of the same name has not been properly identified.

From the testimony of Hiuen-tsang's accounts we know that the city was situated about 90 *li* (or 15 miles) to the south of Vaiśālī from the site of a great *stūpa* where the second Buddhist council was held. The place (the site of the second Buddhist Council) was located at a distance of about 14 or 15 *li* (or 2½ miles) to the south of Vaiśālī. At persent there is no trace of the

11 The Tibetan conquest of central India is misleading and scholars doubt the historical value of the Chinese story, see Majumdar, *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, p. 92. Tibetan historians give various dates of birth of Srong Tsan Gampo ranging between 600 and 617 A.D. (*JASB*, Vol. L, p. 218). Petech believes that he was born in 569 A.D. and reigned from 620 to 650 A.D. (*IHQ*, Vol. XV, pp. 51ff.). Lévi (*Nepal*, Vol. II, p. 173 and Thomas (*Literary Texts*, p. 49) suggest that he died in 650, the latter assigning him the date between 600 and 650 A.D. Francke (*Antiquities of Tibet*, pt. II, pp. 82-84 also holds similar view and places him in between 600 and 650 A.D.

12 The city of Fei-to-po-lo (or Buddhapura) and the monastery of the same name (i.e. Buddhapura Saṃghārāma) is referred to by Hiuen-tsang. The French scholar Julien, who translated the Chinese text restored the name Fei-to-po-lo as Shih-Fei-to-po-lo (Skt. Śvetapura). Although Watters accepts Julien's restoration (see Watters, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 79ff.); but scholars doubt,

stūpa; but a place 2½ miles to the south east of the village of Basadh (ancient Vaiśālī) is believed to be the site of the second Buddhist Council. The details of the celebrated Buddhist pilgrim Hiuen-tsang show that after walking a distance of 90 *li* (or 15 miles) from the place of the second Buddhist Council, the pigrim came to the site of the monastery of Fei-to-po-lo or Buddhapura (wrongly believed as Shih-fei-to-po-lo or Śvetapura) which was situated by the side of a *stūpa* built by Aśoka. It is worthy of note that the Chinese pilgrim after walking further a distance of 30 *li* (or 5 miles) to the south of Fei-to-po-lo monastery (or Buddhapura Saṁghārāma) he came to the bank of the Ganges and saw two *stūpas* built on the corporeal relics of Ānanda, one each on either bank (northern and southern) of the said river (near Pāṭaliputra). Ānanda, the great disciple of Buddha had entered into *niravāṇa* in the Ganges near Pāṭaliputra and his corporeal relics were equally distributed among the Lichchhavis of Vaiśālī and King Ajātaśatru of Magadha and both the claimants had constructed a *stūpa* in their respective territories on the either bank (northern and southern) of the Ganges facing each other. Fa-Hiuen had also visited the place and had seen both the relic *stūpas* of Ānanda at the confluence of five rivers probably Ganges, Gandak, Son, Punpun and Mahi.[13] Thus the above accounts show that the monastery of Fei-to-po-lo (or Buddhapura) was situated at a distance of 30 *li* (or 5 miles) to the north of the Ganges. The distance and description of the city and the monastery of Fei-to-po-lo (wrongly taken as Shih-Fei-to-po-lo) do not correspond with the present situation of Chechar and there is also no substantial archaeological evidence to justify the identification of the site under discussion with so-called Śvetapura. The location of the confluence of five rivers and the sites of the

13 In the Pāli literature the river is called Mahāmahī. In the Sambejja-Sutta of *Saṃyuttanikāya* the river Mahī is regarded as one of the great five rivers namely Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Achiravatī, Sarabhū and Mahī. We know from Dhaniya-Sutta of *Suttanipāta* that Buddha had to spent a night in an open Kuṭī on the bank of the river Mahī (अनुतीरे महिया). It is stated that the *Kuṭī* was roofless and the sky was covered with dark rain clouds. Looking towards the clouds, Buddha had said, 'Deva, rain as much as you wish' (वस्सदेवयथासुखं). The *Aṅguttaranikāya* (IV. p. 101) and *Milhinda paṅho* (Bombay University Pub., p. 73) also refer to this river, see B. C. Law, *Indological Studies*, pt. III, p. 188.

relic *stūpas* of Ānanda cannot be determined at the present state of our knowledge as the river Punpun now flows far to the east of the present confluence of the Ganges and Gandak and falls in the former near Fatwah. The river Son has also changed its old bed and now meets with the Ganges near Maner about 22 miles to the west of Patna (ancient Pāṭaliputra).

The river Ganges has already washed away a considerable portion of the ancient remain of Pāṭaliputra on its southern bank and Chechar on the northern. Therefore, the survival of the relic *stūpas* in question is doubtful. The identification of the ancient Buddhist site of Chechar with the city of Visālāpurī of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is not improbable. B.C. Law's[14] indentification of Śvetapura with the village of Sedaka, Setaka or Desaka in the Suhma Janapada is definitely wrong. The Chinese accounts of Hiuen-tsang and his biographer Hwui-li is very clear on this point and the location of Śvetapura (correct Buddhapura) cannot be placed in the Suhma Janapada (ancient Rāḍha) in south-west Bengal. As we have seen above the place was located at a distance of 90 *li* (about 15 miles) to the south of Fei-she-li (or Vaiśālī)[15] modern Basadh in the Vaishālī district and 30 *li* (or 5 miles) to the north of the Ganges, therefore the existence of the city and the monastery in question at Hajipur cannot be ruled out. The entire area around Hajipur is spotted with mounds, ruins of Buddhist monasteries and old temples. Cunningham[16] (1880-81) noticed the ruins of an old temple called Marahi at a distance of two miles to the north of Hajipur and Pandey (1918-19) discovered the remains of another fragments of stone railings bearing the representation of lotus medallions on

14 Law, *IDBJ*, p. 60. The Suhma Janapada of the *Mahābhārata* is the same as Suṁbha of the Pāli texts. It has been identified with ancient Rāḍha in South-West-Bengal. See Nilakantha, *Com. on Mbh.*, ii, 30, 16; cf. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 9 ff.; Malalasekera, *Dictionary* II, 1252. The Suhma country has been identified by many scholars with the present Hoogly District in West Bengal (R. D. Banerji in *JASB*, 1909, pp. 245ff.; According to D. C. Sircar, the country lay on both banks of the Ajoy river in the modern Burdwan region of south West Bengal (see Sircar, *Geo. An. Med. India*, p. 217).

15 Watters, *loc. cit.* For the identification of Śvetapura see also *Com. Hist. Bih.*, Vol. I, pt. I, p. 960; Patil, *Ant. Rem. Bih.*, p. 158.

16 Cunningham, *ASI*, Vol. XVI, pp. 5ff.; Pandey, *ASI*, *AR*, 1918-19, p. 45; cf. Patil, *loc. cit.*

one side and figure of *Yakṣis* resembling the Mathurā school of Art on the other, at Jharua (within the municipal limit of the town). The extensive ruins of an old fort covering an area of about 360 *bīghās* of land along with the river Gaṇḍaka believed to have been built by Hājī–Iliyas–Shāh (1345–1358 A.D.) founder of the modern Hajipur is standing on the ruins of an old city and the mosque called Jami Masjid is apparently built on the site of an old temple and the material taken from the same temple. The discovery of a hoard of the Gupta gold coins from the *bāzār* area of Hajipur also proves that it was an important place during the Gupta period.

The site of Chechar complex may be identified with the ancient Vajjian villages of Kotigrāma,[17] Nādikā[18] (or Jñātikā) and Ukkāchela or Ukkāchelā[19] known from the Buddhist sources. These were important Buddhist centres and were located on the main trade route of *Uttarāpatha* running from Rājagṛha to Śrāvastī and Pratiṣṭhāna. We find traders of Rājagṛha going to Roruka (or Roruva) by the same route. The place was also connected with the cities of Campā and Tāmralipti through water route. Tāmralipti was an important port and was connected with Suvarṇadvīpa through sea route. The travellers and traders of China had to change their ship at Tāmralipti.

17 The ancient village of Kotigrāma was situated to the north of the Ganges in between the Magadhan village of Pāṭaligrāma and the Vajjian village of Nādikā on the way between Rājagṛha and Vaiśālī.

18 According to the Mahāparinibbāna-Sutta, the village of Nādika or Nādikā or Jñātikā was situated between Kotigrāma and Vaiśālī. Aśvaghoṣa calls it Nādikā (*Buddhacharita*, 22.13). This was the village of the people called *Jñatikās* (see *Sārthappakāsinī*, Vol. II, p. 56). Rahul Sankrityayana wrongly identifies the people (Jñātikās) with the modern Jathariyas or Jaithariyas and the village of Nādikā with the modern Jethardih in the Masrakh, sub-division of the old Saran district and also with Ratti Pargana in the old Muzzafarpur district of north Bihar (see *Buddhacharyā*, p. 493; *Majjhimanikāya*, (Hindi tr.), p. 127).

19 According to Ukkāchela-Sutta of *Saṁyuttanikāya*, the village of Ukkāchela was situated on the northern bank of the Ganges on the Rājagṛha Vaiśālī route (see J. Thomas, The Life of the Buddha, pp. 140 f.; Rahul Sankrityayana locates it somewhere in between Sonepur and Hajipur (*Majjhimanikāya* (Hindi tr.), p. 136).

We find sixteen disciples of Babari Brāhmaṇa travelling from Partiṣṭhāna to Śrāvasti and from there to Rājagṛha by the same route. The important places from Śrāvasti to Rājagṛha were Setavyā, Kapilavastu, Kuśinārā, Pāvā, Bhoganagar, Jambūgrāma, Ambagrāma, Hatthigrāma, Bhaṇḍagrāma, Vaiśālī, Nādikā, Kotigrāma, Pāṭaligrāma (Pāṭaliputra) and Nālandā. It was very favourite route of ancient travellers and traders of east and west and cities such as Pratiṣṭhāna, Māhiṣmatī, Ujjayanī, Gonaddha (Gonarda), Vidiśā, Vanasavahya, Kauśāmbi, Sāketa and Śrāvastī stood on it. Jīvaka, the celebrated physician of Magadha, travelled from Rājagṛha to Taxilā and returned back to his country by the same route. The Vajjiputaka *bhikṣus* of Vaiśālī had gone to Sahajāti near Kauśāmbī in a boat. Thus we have seen that the Vajjian villages of Kotigrāma and Nādikā were situated to the north of the Ganges on the main route of *Uttarāpatha* and were connected with the important cities of ancient India both by land and water routes. Buddha on his last journey from Rājagṛha went to Kuśinārā by the same route. According to Mahāparinibbāna-sutta of *Dīghanikāya*, Buddha on the way of his last journey from Rājagṛha went to Pāṭaligrāma (Pāṭaliputra) and stayed there in rest house called *Āvasthāgāra* and addressed the Upāsakas. Next day, he took his meal with the ministers Sunnidha and Vassakāra of King Ajātaśatru of Magadha who were engaged in laying the foundation of the city of Pāṭaliputra with a view to invade the Vajjians of Vaiśālī (नवरं मापेन्ति वज्जीनं पटिबाहाय).

The river Ganges formed the boundary between the kingdom of Magadha and the Vajji Janapada of Vaiśālī. According to the story preserved in the Mahāparinibbāna-Sutta of *Dīghanikāya*, Buddha crossed the Ganges at Pāṭaligrāma (Pāṭaliputra) and went to the Vajjian village of Kotigrāma where he delivered the teaching of four *ārya-satyas* and ten suttas of Kotigrāma-Vagga of *Saṁyuttanikāya* to the *Bhikṣus*. Aśvaghoṣa in his *Buddhacarita* (22, 13) calls the village as Kuṭi. From Kotigrāma Buddha went to another Vajjian village of Nādikā[20] and stayed there in a brick-built rest house called

20 Woodword thinks that the village of Nātakā referred to by Hiuen-tsang was the same as Nādikā (see *BGS*, Vol. III, p. 217). According to Hiuen-tsang the village of Nātakā was situated on the Ganges in between Vaiśālī and Pāṭaliputra (cf. Watters, *op. cit.*, p. 86).

Giñjakāvasatha which was constructed for him by the inhabitants of the same village during his first visit and was later developed into a monastery.[21] The village of Nādikā was situated in between Kotigrāma and Vaiśālī and was inhabited by the people called Jñātikās and therefore it was known as Jñātikā (ञातिकेति द्विन्नं ञातिकानं गामे). The village of Jñātikā was also called as Nādikā as it was situated by the side of a tank called Nādikā (नादिकाति एतं तळाकं निस्साय).

It is worthy of note that the village of Nādikā was an important centre of the Buddhists during the life time of the Buddha and was visited by him on many occasions. The *sthaviras* like Anuraddha, Kimbila, Nandiya and Ānanda had also visited the village with the Buddha and had stayed there. In the Giñjakāvasatha Suttas of *Śaṁyuttanikāya*, we find Ānanda and Buddha enjoying the beautiful surroundings of the Giñjakāvasatha *Vihāra* of Nādikā. The Upāsakas like Aśoka, Kaliṅga, Nikata, Katissaha, Tuṭṭha, Santuṭha, Bhadra and Subhadra were living in the village and the Buddha delivered the teachings of Chula-Gosiṅga-Sutanta of *Majjhima-nikāya* and many other *Suttas* of *Aṅguttaranikāya* while living in the same village.[22] The village of Nādikā had a beautiful forest of the Śāla trees (*Śālavana*) called *Gosiṅgasālavana (Go-śṛṅga-Śālavana)* and the Buddha had visited and stayed there with the *bhikṣus*.

The third Vajjian village which may be identifed with the present site of Chechar complex was Ukkāchela or Ukkachelā. It was situated just on the northern bank of the Ganges and was on the way between Rājagṛha (modern Rajgir) and Vaiśālī (modern Basadh in the Vaishālī district). It was one of the favourite places of Buddha and his great disciples Sārīputra and Maudgalyāyana. The Chula-Gopalak-Sutanta of *Majjhima-nikāya* and Chela-Sutta of *Saṁyuttanikāya* was preached by Buddha himself and the teachings the *nibbāna-sutta* was imparted to a *paribrājaka* named *Sāmaṇḍaka* by Sāriputra while staying in the same village. Buddha had visited Ukkāchela sometime after the death of Sāriputra and Maudgalyāyana

21 *Papanchapasudanī*, Vol. I, p. 424.

22. *Aṅguttaranikāya*, Vol. III, p. 306; IV, p. 316 and 320. The Sālavana called Gosinga-Sālavana was situated close to the village of Nādikā and it was always frequented by Buddhist *bhikṣus* and Śrāvakas. The Go-Singa-Sālavana was named after a Śāla-tree which was in the middle of the forest and its two branches looking like the (two) horns of a cow (see *Majjhimanikāya* (Hindi tr.), pp. 127 and 132.

and we find him on the sandy bank of the Ganges in the same village recalling the memory of his deceased disciples (Sāriputra and Maudalyāyana). Buddha had gone to this village from Śrāvastī when the news of the *nirvāṇa* of his *agra-śrāvakas* Sāriputra and Maudgalyāyana was given to him by Chundasamanuddesa (younger brother of Sāriputta). From Ukkāchela, Buddha had gone to Rājagṛha and had constructed a *chaitya* at the gate of Venuvana in the memory of Maudgalyāyana. We know from the Ukkāchela-Sutta of *Saṁyuttanikāya* that Buddha had gone again to Ukkāchela from Rājagṛha and had delivered the secrets of the *nirvāṇa* of his great disciples Sāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, Ukkāchela was very favourite place for the Buddha and his disciples.

Thus we have seen that the extensive archaeological remains of Chechar complex represent the ancient sites of the Vajjian villages of Kotigrāma, Nādikā and Ukkāchela (or Ukkāchelā) of the time of the Buddha which later developed into an urban settlement (or township) and was in flourishing condition during the Maurya, Śuṅga, Kuṣāṇa and the Gupta periods. The ancient city (of Chechar) was an important centre of the religious and political activities and had trade relations with East and West and the important towns and cities of the country.

Dīdāragañja (in Patna city) was an important *ghāṭa* in the Pāṭaligrāma (Pāṭaliputra) on the Ganges (during the life time of the Buddha and also probably in the later period) and while travelling through Rājagṛha-Nālandā Pāṭaligrāma-Kotigrāma Nādikā-Vaiśālī route one had to get the boat from Dīdāragañja *ghāṭa* (at Pāṭaligrāma) to cross the Ganges. Rājagṛha-Ukkāchela-Vaiśālī route was located further to the east in between Patna city and Fatwah somewhere near the present Patna city-Chechar route. From both the above routes, the boats had to move with the favourable current of the Ganges towards north-east direction to reach the northern bank somewhere to the east of Hājīpur in the vicinity of present Chechar (ancient Kotigrāma-Nādikā and Ukkāchela).

The Raghopur Diyara which is situated in the middle of the Ganges to the south of Chechar and to the east of Patna city (ancient Pāṭaliputra) formed the part of south Bihar and seems to have been separated from land

by the flood waters of the Son, Punpun and Ganges. The exploration in this area is expected to throw welcome light on the present problem and the ancient history of Bihar.

The discovery of a seated terracotta figurine of Buddha (about 1" high) from the brick ruins in the village of Bajitpur (two kilometres to the east of Chechar) and three stone images (of about 11th-12th century A.D.) of the seated Buddha in *Bhūmisparśa mudrā* now installed in the modern temples at the Chechar *ghāṭa* on the Ganges suggests that the place continued to be of some importance for the Buddhists till the Pāla-Sena period.



THE JOURNAL
OF THE
BIHAR RESEARCH SOCIETY
L. N. MISHRA COMMEMORATION VOLUME

Vols. LXIII-LXIV 1977-1978

Chief Editor
Professor Upendra Thakur

Editor-in-Charge
Dr. K. K. Mandal



PUBLISHED BY
THE BIHAR RESEARCH SOCIETY
PATNA